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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the extent to which teacher education programs in Region VIII (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming) were or were not providing instruction about child abuse and neglect. Among findings were the following: the majority of teacher education programs offered some instruction in this area, courses containing instruction regarding child abuse and neglect were most often taught under the heading of education, and 57% of the respondents were correct in indicating that teachers are responsible for reporting. Results led to such suggestions as the inclusion in teacher education of minimum preparatory programs which cover identification of the abused and neglected child and appropriate policies and procedures for making a formal request for further investigation by those designated by law to conduct such investigations. (SBH)

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Teacher Education — An Active Participant in Solving the Problem of Child Abuse and Neglect

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Report No. 99

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From the ECS Child Abuse Project

Education Commission of the States
Denver, Colorado 80295
Warren G. Hill, Executive Director

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Teacher Education — An Active Participant in Solving the Problem of Child Abuse and Neglect

Until recently, child abuse and neglect was not thought to be a concern of the schools. Much of the literature prior to Gil's (1969)[1] report strongly suggested that abused and neglected children were of preschool age. In 1969, however, Gil reported that 47.6 percent of the reported abuse cases *were* of school age. And, more recently, Lebsack (1976)[2] reporting on the highlights of data collected by the Children's Division of the American Humane Association's National Clearinghouse on Child Neglect and Abuse shows 43.13 percent of all cases were from "public and private social agencies, schools and school personnel, law enforcement, courts, (and) hotlines." Unfortunately, the number of cases specifically reported by schools and school personnel is not included in Lebsack's data. The data are supportive of Gil's 1969 findings, however, and tend to confirm the call of many (Ferro, 1976[3]; Shanas, 1975[4]; Education Commission of the States, 1976[5]) for significantly greater involvement of the schools in the area of child abuse and neglect.

Because of compulsory attendance laws, school personnel come in daily contact with almost one-half of the abused and neglected population.[6,7] Once in school, "a child's ap-

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[1] D. Gil, "What Schools Can Do About Child Abuse," *American Education*, 5, 1969, pp. 2-5.

[2] J. Lebsack, *Highlights of 1974 National Data* (National Clearinghouse on Child Neglect and Abuse, Children's Division, American Humane Association, Denver, Colo.: 1976).

[3] F. Ferro, "Combatting Child Abuse and Neglect," *Children Today*, 4, 1975.

[4] B. Shanas, "Child Abuse: A Killer Teachers Can Help Control," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 1975, 61, pp. 479-482.

[5] Education Commission of the States, *Educational Policies and Practices Regarding Child Abuse*, Report #85 (Denver, Colo: Education Commission of the States, 1976).

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Shanas.

pearance and behavior are observed regularly by a number of people . . . ."[8] In brief, "The teacher may well be the first line of defense for the child against child abuse."[9] Involving the schools and their personnel in the battle against child abuse and neglect seems amply justified for a number of reasons. Among the reasons are:

1. Currently, 33 of the 50 states specifically name teachers or school personnel among those required by law to report suspected cases of abuse and/or neglect. The balance have mandatory reporting laws and list "any person" or "institutions" (or similar language) in their statutes.

2. Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act) requires the public schools to provide appropriate services for all handicapped children at 3 years of age by 1978. As a result more children will benefit from the observation of trained personnel at earlier ages and greater numbers of children will, in effect, be "in school."

3. Homestart, Headstart and other "preschool" programs are becoming increasingly available in all parts of the country.

4. Most abused and neglected children demonstrate educational and/or psychological problems in the school environment[10] [11] and teachers have been trained to seek the help of other professionals if a child is suspected to have learning problems. For example, teachers seek the help of the psychologist if a child is suspected to have an intellectual deficit, the audiologist if the child is suspected to have a hearing deficit

[8] D. Broadhurst, "Project Protection: A School Program to Detect and Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect," *Children Today*, 1975, 4, pp. 22-25.

[9] Shanas.

[10] D. Kline and J. Christiansen, *Educational and Psychological Problems of Abused Children*, Final report, Contract No. G00-75-00352 (U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1975).

[11] R. K. Oats, *The Spectrum of Failure to Thrive and Child Abuse: A Follow-Up Study*, Paper read at the first International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect, Geneva, Switzerland, October 1976. (Article in Pergamon Press, London)

and the optometrist or opthalmologist if a visual deficit is suspected. It seems logical, therefore, that a teacher should make a formal request (called a "report" in state statutes) for an investigation of the child's environment if abuse and/or neglect is suspected.

5. Teachers are trained observers of child growth and development and should be aware of behavior that interferes with academic achievement. Hence, a teacher making a formal request for an investigation of the child's environment if abuse and/or neglect is suspected should be a perfectly normal professional response.

There is sufficient evidence to indicate that when teachers have been trained, they become effective participants in the referral process. After teachers were informed of their legal responsibility in Syracuse, New York, the school system became "the greatest single source of uncovering these problems (abuse and neglect) in Syracuse."[12] Project PROTECTION, a federally funded project in Montgomery County, Maryland, has brought about a steady increase in child abuse referrals.[13] In the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, the SCAN (School Children—Abused and Neglected) Project produced over 170 referrals in its first months of operation. In the first 25 days of operation, a team in the Jefferson County Public Schools in Colorado reported 22 cases.[14] In all instances teachers were involved in reporting suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

One of the major reasons for their past non-involvement is a lack of available training and knowledge.[15] In view of legal responsibilities and the potential of schools for aiding in the identification and secondary prevention of this problem, it is important that teachers receive necessary training in child abuse and neglect.

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[12] C. Murdock, "The Abused Child and the School System," *American and Public Health*, 1970, pp. 60, 105-109.

[13] Broadhurst.

[14] *Educational Policies and Practices Regarding Child Abuse.*

[15] C. Riddle, "An Assessment of the Level of Awareness of Utah Public School Special Educators Concerning the State's Child Abuse Reporting Laws and Procedures" (Master's thesis, Utah State University, 1975).

However, there is little information available to determine if preservice teacher education programs have adjusted their curricula to insure that all teachers have had instruction to make them knowledgeable members of multidisciplinary teams essential to appropriate and successful intervention in child abuse and neglect cases. To date, only one study has attempted to determine if teachers had received any instruction about child abuse and neglect during their preparatory teacher education program. Riddle (1975)[16] found only 18.8 percent of the special education teachers in one state had received any instruction while they were in college preparatory programs. As a prelude to the present study, a review was completed of the available college catalogs of teacher education programs in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming[17]. The review found no reference to child abuse and neglect in any of the course summaries. While this does not rule out the possibility of the subject being covered in seminars, during student teaching or as a segment of another course, it strongly suggests that little is being done.

In light of the available literature and lack of information regarding the extent to which teachers are trained to participate effectively in the battle against child abuse and neglect, the authors undertook a study to determine:

1. If teacher education programs are providing instruction in the area of child abuse and neglect.

2. The format of the presentation (i.e., guest lecture, a unit within a course, a seminar included as a part of the student teaching experience, etc.).

3. The amount of time spent on training teachers in the area of child abuse and neglect.

4. The department or combination of departments providing the instruction.

5. If the training is mandatory or optional.

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[16] *Ibid.*

[17] These states make up Region VIII of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's 10 regions throughout the country.

6. Whether the instruction is offered at the graduate or undergraduate level.

7. The content of the curriculum on abuse and neglect.

8. If no training is provided, the plans for providing instruction in the future.

9. Why instruction on child abuse and neglect was or was not provided.

10. If university personnel were aware of the teachers' legal responsibility to report.

Procedures

In order to obtain data concerning the extent to which teacher education programs in Region VIII were or were not providing instruction about child abuse and neglect, a survey of the teacher education programs in Region VIII was conducted by the investigators. All teacher education programs in Region VIII, listed in the 1976 Directory of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, were included in the survey. The data obtained were compiled and analyzed in terms of the above objectives.

Results

Of the 41 teacher education programs in Region VIII, a total return of 87.7 percent was achieved by use of two mailings and a telephone follow-up interview. The data presented below relates directly to the objectives established for the study.

Question 1: Do teacher education programs in Region VIII provide instruction in the area of child abuse and neglect?

Table 1 shows that the majority (72.2 percent) of the teacher education programs do offer some instruction in this area.

Question 2: What is the format of the presentation? Is instruction provided as a part of student teaching, by a guest lecturer, as a unit within an existing course, as a separate course or other type of instruction?

The majority of the programs in Region VIII (88.5 percent) report that they provide instruction in child abuse and neglect as a unit within a course. Only three (11.5 percent) provide a course devoted to the subject.

Question 3: How much time is spent on training teachers about child abuse and/or neglect?

The data indicate that the amount of time (in clock hours) spent on the subject ranged from a low of 1 hour to a high of 30 hours. The average time spent on the subject was 4.3 hours. This mean score may be inflated, however, because in each

Table 1

Programs Offering Instruction in Child Abuse and Neglect

State	Number of Schools Responding/ Schools in the State	Response Percent	No Instruction Offered	Instruction Offered in Some Form
Colorado	11/11	100 %	3	8(77.7%)
Montana	6/8	75	2	4(50.0%)
North Dakota	6/6	100	1	5(83.3%)
South Dakota	7/9	77.7	3	4(57.0%)
Utah	5/5	100	1	4(80.0%)
Wyoming	1/1	100	0	1(100.0%)
Region VIII	36/41	87.2%	10	26(72.2%)

format there was one score that was extreme (8 hours in student teaching and 30 hours in a unit). When these are removed from consideration, the adjusted means change considerably. The mean time spent on child abuse instruction changes from 3.6 hours to 2.5 hours in student teaching and from 4.3 to 2.8 in coverage within a unit. And, the mean for the total time in both areas shifts from 4.3 to 2.76 clock hours.

Thus, it appears that the Education Commission of the States' National Advisory Committee position[15] that child abuse is covered, but only superficially, is supported.

Question 4: What department or combination of departments is providing the instruction on child abuse and neglect?

Table 2 displays the range of departments providing instruction in the area of child abuse and neglect.

Table 2

Distribution of Departments Offering Instruction in Child Abuse and Neglect

Department	Frequency
Early Childhood	1
Education	11
Educational Psychology	1
Elementary Education	2
Family Life (Home Economics)	1
Psychology	4
Secondary Education	1
Special Education	3
No Response	2
Total	26

Several respondents indicated a combination of departments were involved in one course and some reported their

[15] R. Bennett, Personal communication letter to Senator Mondale, Oct. 4, 1976.

involvement in more than one course. Thus, the cumulative total is actually more than 25.

The date indicates that courses containing instruction regarding child abuse and neglect are most often taught under the heading of "education." The implications of this are difficult to assess, due to the different organizational structures of the colleges and universities offering teacher education programs.

Question 5: Is the training offered in child abuse and neglect mandatory (required for graduation and/or certification) or optional?

Table 3 displays the appropriate response to this question.

Table 3

Required/Not Required Course and Level at Which Course is Offered

Required/Not Required	Frequency
Optional	6
Required	10
Unrelated to graduation or certification	1
No answer	9

It would appear from the data obtained that instruction offered in child abuse and neglect is a requirement for graduation and/or certification in 10 of the institutions responding to this question. Conclusions based on these data should be made cautiously, however. If, for example, the instruction is offered as a unit or module within a course that is required, the requirement for instruction in child abuse and neglect per se may or may not be covered or considered adequate in the opinion of those who are knowledgeable about the subject. Moreover, it should be noted that almost as many people did not answer this inquiry as those who indicated that instruction is mandatory as a part of the graduation and/or certification requirements.

Question 6: Is the instruction offered at the graduate or undergraduate level?

This question yielded the lowest level of resonse and it is not possible to draw any conclusions based on the number (15) of responses. Of the responses, however, one program offers the instruction at the graduate level, only seven at the undergraduate level and three at both the graduate and the undergraduate level. Of the 26 responses, 11 provided no answer to this question.

Question 7: What does the curriculum on child abuse and neglect contain?

To assess the content of the curriculum on child abuse and neglect, a representative sample of content areas was provided as an integral part of the questionnaire. The list of possible content areas was given in the question and the respondents were asked to indicate the areas covered. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Content Covered in Instruction of Abuse and Neglect

Content Area	Frequency
Incidence of abuse	14
History of abuse	5
Definition of abuse and neglect	15
Recognizing abuse	14
Recognizing neglect	12
Reporting procedures	10
Legal responsibilities	15
Consequences of reporting	10
Problems in reporting	11
Effects of abuse and neglect	11
Dealing with abused/neglected children	8
Agencies dealing with child abuse and neglect	11
Other—dealing with parents	1
Average No. Covered	10.53
No response	9

From the available data it appears that there was no agree-

ment upon content areas covered by those responding. The areas of definition (a problem still unresolved in the literature) and the legal responsibility of teachers and other school personnel to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect seemed to be covered most frequently. It is interesting to note, however, that while legal responsibility was often covered (15) the procedures involved in making the report (10) was not covered as frequently.

Since only 2.7 clock hours of instruction is reported as the mean number of hours spent on the subject of child abuse and neglect, it is also interesting to note the number of content areas covered in this time. The average number of content areas covered is 10.53. With an adjusted average of 2.7 hours spent in instruction, it would seem that the average time spent per content area would be approximately 11 minutes. Again, this data also supports the position of the Education Commission of the States' National Advisory Committee's position[1] that child abuse is covered, but only superficially.

Question 8: If no training in child abuse and neglect is currently provided, are there plans for providing instruction in this area in the future?

Of the 10 programs offering no instruction in the subject, 6 responded negatively regarding plans to offer such instruction in the future and the remaining 4 respondents indicated that they did not know.

Question 9: What is the rationale used in offering child abuse and neglect instruction, or if it is not offered, what is the rationale for not offering the instruction?

Of the 25 programs that offer instruction in child abuse and neglect, 16 responded to the question. Four of these cited the legal responsibilities of teachers and four others referred to the current interest and relevance of the subject. Three of the respondents referred to abused children as being exceptional children and the necessity of teachers' awareness of these children and their needs. The remaining five respondents offered five different reasons for the instruction.

Only 6 of the 10 who did not offer instruction responded to

[1] Bennett

this question. Four said that knowledge in the field was not essential in teaching. One stated that there was a lack of information available and one respondent cited limited time as the reason.

Question 10: Are university personnel (involved in the teacher education program) aware of the teachers' legal responsibility to report?

The laws in all states under consideration except Utah specifically named teachers among those required to report and Utah's State Board of Education has a statewide policy mandating that school personnel report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

Only one respondent failed to answer this question. Thus, out of the remaining 35, 20 or 57% were correct in indicating yes, teachers are responsible for reporting. Out of the remaining 15, 6 indicated that teachers were not legally responsible and 9 indicated that they did not know. This is only slightly better than the results of Riddle's (1975)[20] survey of special educators in which 40.5% were accurate in their knowledge about their state's child abuse law. The fact that those involved in teacher education are not better informed may explain the lack of comprehensive child abuse and neglect instruction in preservice education programs.

[20] Riddle.

Conclusions

Conclusions regarding the extent to which teacher education programs are or are not providing instruction in the area of child abuse and neglect should be made with caution, based on the results of this investigation. The population under consideration in this study included only those teacher education programs in states that comprise Region VIII. There are some observations, however, that seem justified on the basis of existing literature and the results obtained in this study. These are:

1. Teachers and other professional school personnel should be trained to participate effectively as members of multidisciplinary teams engaged in the battle against child abuse and neglect.

2. A more intensive examination of the instruction offered prospective teachers in the area of child abuse and neglect should be undertaken.

3. If the population under consideration in this investigation is representative of teacher education programs throughout the nation, there seems to be no agreement about what should be included in an instruction sequence regarding child abuse and neglect.

4. If the present population is representative of programs throughout the country, a very modest amount of time is devoted to instruction in this area.

Recommendations

1. Since teachers and other professional school personnel can be held both legally and professionally responsible for not making appropriate referral of suspected cases of child abuse and neglect, it becomes incumbent upon preparatory programs to provide training.

2. Based on present state statutes, teachers and other school personnel are obligated to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. It follows, therefore, that as a minimum, preparatory programs should provide instruction in: (a) identification of the abused and neglected child and (b) appropriate policies and procedures for making a formal request for further investigation by those designated by law to conduct such investigations.

3. Teacher education programs should give serious consideration to recommending an individual for certification in the absence of instruction in dealings with suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

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